

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable consideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 9, 32, 34, 36, 39 and 40-50 are presently pending in this application, Claims 9 and 36 amended, and Claims 41-50 having been newly added by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 9 and 36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Iwasaki et al. (U.S. Patent 6,477,038) in view of Ozawa et al. (U.S. Patent 6,526,859). However, Claims 32, 34, 39 and 40 were indicated as allowed.

First, Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication that Claims 32, 34, 39 and 40 have been allowed.

In addition, Applicants wish to thank Examiner Dinh for the September 15, 2009 personal interview at which time the outstanding issues were discussed. During the interview, Applicants presented amendments and arguments substantially as indicated in this response. In particular, Applicants explained that the newly cited reference to Ozawa et al. does not teach the island in sea structure as recited in Claims 9 and 36. Further, Applicants explained several features which could be added to the claims in order to further distinguish the claimed invention over the cited references. These features are now included by way of amendments to Claims 9 and 36, as well as new Claims 41-50. No Agreement was reached.

Turning now to the merits, in order to expedite issuance of a patent in this case, Applicants have amended Claims 9 and 36 to clarify the patentable features over the cited references. Specifically, as discussed in the September 15th interview, amended Claims 9 and 36 recite that the solder resist layer is ***“a resin comprising at least a thermosetting resin.”*** That is, while the previously claimed resin could include either a thermoplastic resin alone, or a thermosetting resin alone, the amended claims require that the resin must include a

thermosetting resin. As also discussed in the September 15th interview, a thermosetting resin has a rigid or hardened property after curing.

The Office Action admits that the primary reference to Iwasaki et al. does not disclose that the “elastomer component is provided within the at least one resin ... and the elastomer component is separated in micro-phase so as to form an island-in-sea structure,” but cites Ozawa et al. as teaching this feature. As discussed in Applicants’ specification, “island-in-sea” structure means a state where the elastomer component exists like islands dispersed in the sea of the solder resist composition other than the elastomer component, and this structure can minimize cracking and peeling caused by stresses to the multilayer printed circuit board.¹

In contrast, the newly cited reference to Ozawa et al. discloses a flexible hose made from a thermoplastic elastomer composition². The hose includes an inner tube 2, a reinforcing layer 3 and an outer cover 4. These layers are bonded to one another by bonding layers 5 and 6. However, there is no disclosure in Ozawa et al. of the claimed “island in sea structure.” Moreover, as discussed in the interview, improvements to flexibility of the flexible hose are provided by use of the thermoplastic. That is, the flexibility sought by Ozawa et al. would deteriorate if a thermosetting resin were used.

For the reasons discussed above, Claims 9 and 36 patentably define over the cited references. As new Claims 41-50 depend from Claims 9 or 36, these claims also patentably define over the cited references by way of their dependency. Nevertheless, as discussed in the September 15th interview, these claims even further distinguish over the cited references. For example, Claims 41 and 45 recite that the island in sea structure consists of a plurality of discrete volumes of the elastomer component distributed within a volume of the resin. Claims 43 and 47 recite an inorganic filler. Finally Claims 49 and 50 recite multiple

¹ Applicants’ specification at page 16, lines 1-8.

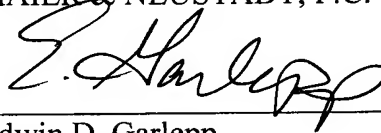
² Ozawa et al. at Abstract.

features in combination. The cited references do not teach the additional features of Claims 41-50.

In light of the prior indication of allowable claims and in view of the amendments presented above, no further issues are believed to be outstanding, and the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. If, however, the Examiner disagrees with any of the foregoing amendments, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned who will be happy to work in a joint effort to resolve remaining issues and expedite the prosecution of this application. Applicants respectfully request an early and favorable action to that effect.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Edwin D. Garlepp
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 45,330

Customer Number

22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 07/09)